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ZIONISM AND PATRIOTISM.

A LECTURE

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BY

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ZIONISM AND PATRIOTISM.

BY DR. SAMUEL DAICHES.

Can a Zionist be a patriot? Can a Jew who believes in and works for the regeneration of his people in its ancient land be a true citizen of the country in which he lives? This is the question which now agitates the mind of many a leading member of our community and gives a heavy heart to many a young student who has joined or would like to join a University Zionist Society. Some of our communal leaders seem to have found the answer—an absolute negative. Zionism is incompatible with patriotism, is incompatible with true citizenship. We are Englishmen and nothing but Englishmen. We are just like our fellow-citizens. We only have—it must be added—a different creed. But this is of no consequence. Does not the English nation consist, for instance, of Roman Catholics as well as Protestants? And are there not many sects among the latter? We have a different creed, but are otherwise Englishmen as all the rest of the English people. The givers of this answer might be satisfied with it and their minds might have found rest. But the hearts of the students are still heavy. They feel that the answer does not set matters right. It is in the nature of the young to seek the truth, and while the old believe they have found it, the young continue their search. And, indeed, when you go on seeking you find that the truth of the old was only an imaginary truth.

Questions without number force themselves upon us if we accept the answer, say, of the signatories of the letter in the *Jewish Chronicle* of April 9. If we are Englishmen in the same way as our neighbours, why have we got a history different from theirs? Has not our development been different? Has not our life been different for centuries, nay for thousands of years? And have we not, have not our ancestors produced in some of those centuries certain elements of culture, which are still existing and still stand in the name of Israel? Israel! Does not this

name give us a rude shaking? Israel that lived thousands of years ago, Israel that became the chosen people of God, Israel that produced thoughts which changed the world—are we not a part of this Israel? And are we, the Jews living in England, the only part of Israel? Are not parts of Israel to be found in almost every country in the world? Can this be said of any other section of the English nation? In a word, are we not members of a different race, a race that not only lived in the past, but is still living? And does not this make us different from all the rest of Englishmen?

And our creed? Is it really a matter of such small importance as not to make us in the least different from all the rest of Englishmen? Of course, creed may be considered an elastic word. Judaism may mean to some a pale Deism and nothing more. I cannot enter here into theological discussions. But this may be said: that according to our tradition Judaism is more than mere Deism. Judaism is composed of so many elements quite apart from the belief in one God. Belief and action, creed and life, will and its expression, idea and its mode of realisation. All this can be distinctly Jewish and goes to make up Judaism. And many other elements. Can, for instance, the belief and the teachings of Judaism be adequately expressed in any other language but Hebrew? Can the unity of God and love for God be so well and so beautifully expressed as in the Hebrew words of *שמע*? And are there not thousands of ideas and thoughts emanating from our creed and contributing towards its strengthening, which are our own property, our own products, which are part and parcel of the Jewish race? What are the prophecies of Israel and what its psalms? Expressions of beliefs and hopes for the realisation of ideas as only possible in Israel. A passionate seeking of God and a loving living in Him as only to be found in Israel. And the historical background! Need I remind you of the history of Israel since the time when Abraham left Mesopotamia up to the present day? Need I remind you of all the vicissitudes Israel lived through in all these thousands of years, of the times of its greatness and the times of its smallness, of the times it received revelations and of the times it lived in darkness? Need I remind you of the fact that through all the changing centuries Israel remained one, one undividable nation? “Look at the rock from which you are hewn,” says the prophet. All the parts of the Jewish nation are hewn from one rock. Who can deny it? And even were we to deny it, others would come and acknowledge it. Believing Christians,

believing Englishmen would come and tell us : you are not a part of our race, you are the chosen people of God, you are the children of Israel. They see in our existence the finger of God. Less amiable people also know of our separate existence. Mr. Balfour made his—unjust—declarations about the Jews in Parliament before the University Zionist Societies were ever dreamt of. We cannot hide ourselves. We have no reason to do it. But even if we wanted to do it, we could not do it. The heavens are our witnesses and the stars thereof. Every new day dawning on humanity tells of the existence of Israel and of all that this name implies.

The "Englishman of the Jewish persuasion," the "German of the Jewish persuasion," etc., is therefore a religious absurdity, an historical untruth. And we must be true and consistent. Only when we are true to ourselves and consistent in our lives, can we be good patriots. But how can we be true and consistent? There are two possibilities : (1) Assimilation or (2) Zionism. Let us first consider the first possibility.

To assimilate means to intentionally put an end to our existence. To assimilate means to become an Englishman, a German, a Frenchman without the "Jewish persuasion." Assimilation is a difficult process, but it can be honestly tried. The start must of course be made with intermarriage. A Jew without the Jewish persuasion marries an Englishwoman and a Jewess without the Jewish persuasion marries an Englishman. They, naturally, go to one church or to one chapel or stay together in sulky freethinkerdom at home. The children are Christian (or freethinking) Englishmen and Englishwomen. The mixing with the English race continues, and after a few generations the descendants of the first couple that intermarried are completely English. Some prominent Jewish families of our community have already started this experiment. If all the Jews living in England would follow suit, the assimilation of English Jewry would be an accomplished fact. I said that assimilation was a slow process. So it is. It takes generations. In the meantime some assimilated person might reconsider the fact and return to Judaism. Another great difficulty is our dispersion. If all the Jews lived in one country and they all decided in one day to take the plunge and put an end to their existence, assimilation might be possible. But as we live in so many different countries the ceasing of English Jewry would not mean yet the ceasing of the Jewish people. And even more, even English Jewry would most probably not cease because

newcomers would always fill the gaps (unless a new Bill were passed that in order to put an end to Brick Lane a brick wall should be built round Great Britain). But let us assume that assimilation is possible and that it has been started. What good will it do to England? We are now speaking only from the point of view of English patriotism. Let us assume that for the sake of patriotism all the three hundred thousand Jews living now in this country have become assimilated. How does England benefit by this? Instead of having forty-four millions of people it will have forty-four millions and three hundred thousand. A mere addition of numbers, nothing more. A drop in the ocean. Three hundred thousand people more or less is of little consequence for a great nation. What service would we have done to the country? None. In what way would we have increased the welfare of England? In no way. On the contrary, we might have prevented it from having a Disraeli. If the German Jews, for example, would have submerged in the German nation, say, two hundred years ago, they would most probably have deprived Germany of a Heine. With the Jews their specific qualities and their peculiar culture-elements would have disappeared. And there can be no doubt that, instead of enriching England, we would have made it poorer, much poorer by our disappearance. Moreover, the loss of the Jew would have been not only a loss to England's material and spiritual resources, but also to its faith. Assimilation would therefore be a very doubtful service to our country. Now, if assimilation were a doubtful service to England, it would also be a doubtful act of patriotism. And as good patriots we would have to give up anything that is not sure to be perfectly patriotic, that is not sure to increase the well-being of England. Let us therefore turn to the second possibility, to Zionism.

Zionism is the antithesis of assimilation. Zionism presupposes our steadfast adherence to our race and our faith, our belief in the continued existence of the nation of Israel and our hope in Israel's great future, a future distinct from the future of the nations among whom we live. Zionism, naturally, implies that we desire the coming of that future and that we are willing to work for the hastening of that time. Zionism, in one word, expresses our feeling that we are Jews, and says clearly that we admire our life in the past as a productive nation in Palestine, that we fully admit that we are at present merely vegetating and that we long for the regeneration of Israel in its ancient land and are

determined to work for the realisation of that aim. But should all this, you will ask, be for us a means of living as good English patriots? Yes. Let us see.

As Zionists, that is as national Jews with Jewish hopes to be realised in the old Jewish land we are, first of all, truthful. We need not distort the "religious persuasion" and need not disfigure history. All is fair and square and right. We have a history of our own, a development of our own, a religion of our own, a culture of our own and we are all—all Jews—one. We look to the rock and know that we are all hewn from it. Our existence is in harmony with the facts and there is nothing to explain away. It is a beautiful existence, because it is a true existence. But where does our patriotism come in? Here it is. Being scattered all over the world we become citizens of the country in which we live, faithful, loving citizens. We become a part of the *res publica*. We adopt, to a very large extent, the culture of the nation, in whose midst we live and have the fullest desire to take part in promoting the welfare of the country. But what we do is even more. Blessings we take and blessings we want to return. Fully conscious of our being different, we employ our specifically Jewish qualities for the benefit, say, of England. We add our peculiar culture-elements to the English culture-elements and produce something entirely distinct, something that England alone could not produce. More or less important productions of this kind are being produced every day in England by Jewish enterprise, by Jewish industry, by Jewish intellect (I hope you will not be surprised at my putting the intellect last). In this way a Disraeli was possible in England, in this way a Heine was possible in Germany (although they assimilated, their existence was naturally a result of the Jewish life of the English and German Jews), in this way a Spinoza was possible in Holland. In this way, I hope, English Jewry will produce yet great Jews. Thus, by living a true, full Jewish life the Jews living in England do not merely become an additional number, but become three hundred thousand *differentiated* Englishmen. While three hundred thousand more Englishmen are of little consequence, three hundred thousand differentiated Englishmen are a most valuable asset. An addition of new, of different culture-elements is a tremendous enrichment of the national resources. True, we are not "as English in thought" as the members of the English race. But this is to England's advantage. It is our *not* being "entirely English in thought" which is England's gain.

But what about the future? Zionism says that our future lies in Palestine. Is this not against patriotism? Is this not against the interests of the country in which we live? No, even our national aspirations in Palestine do not in the least clash with our English interests. On the contrary, they further them. What is the reason of our Zionist aspirations? We see that we do not do so much as we could do. We feel that we are of much less use to the world than we could have been. We feel that we do not belong to the producers of the world's culture at present. In short, we feel that as a nation we are vegetating. We see that while in the past we produced the noblest spiritual goods and gave to the greater part of mankind its most cherished ideas, we do now comparatively little. We are living now on the goods of our fathers, but do not take any prominent part in mankind's creations. We see that instead of being the influencers we are now the influenced. And we feel we cannot endure this state very long. We want to produce again and bring again blessings to ourselves and to mankind. This, again, we feel and see from our past, we can do only as a nation in the land of our fathers. And therefore we consider it as our most sacred duty to work for the realisation of the Zionist aim. But by working for the realisation of this aim we are working not only for ourselves, but also for our adopted country, and this not only because with the fulfilment of our hopes the hopes of millions of believing Englishmen will be fulfilled, but also—and mainly—because our adopted country will share in the good that will come from us. Thus, while working for the realisation of Zionism, we are working for the greater happiness of our fellow-citizens. Is this not the best possible patriotism? I am not taking now into account the position of millions of our brethren, who live in oppression and whose patriotism is sorely tried, and whose uplifting would be an immeasurably great work. I am speaking now only from the point of view of an English patriot. And as such I say that Zionism implies the work for the welfare of England in the present as well as in the future. And another thing must be kept in mind. It is not the intention of Zionism that all the Jews all over the world should leave the countries in which they live and emigrate to Palestine. This is not necessary, this is scarcely possible. There has never been a day in Jewish history on which all the Jews existing lived in Palestine. What we want is to create again a *centre* of Jewish culture, a new spring of Jewish ideas. What we want is a new creative Israel in the land of Israel. But a great number

of Jews will always remain in the Diaspora and continue to be citizens in the lands in which they live. The tie between the Jews and their fellow-citizens will therefore never be entirely severed, unless—and this, we all hope, is impossible now—it be severed by our fellow-citizens. And through the Jewish centre in Palestine, through the creative Juda, the usefulness of the Diaspora Jews will naturally also be increased. I need only remind you of the influence German intellect and industry had on the shaping of the United States of America in the last century. The realisation of the Zionist idea would therefore be the best service the Jews could do to their respective adopted fatherlands. By the realisation of the Zionist aim a new culture-factor would appear in the world, which would bestow untold blessings on humanity at large, and the Jews in all lands would become better, nobler and more useful to themselves and to their fellow-citizens. Thus, Zionism in all its aspects also works for the welfare of the countries in which we live.

Zionism is, therefore, not only compatible with patriotism, but furthers it. It gives us a *raison d'être*, it gives us a straight back and an erect head, it gives us our right position in the world and in our adopted fatherlands, it makes us consistent Jews and good citizens, it gives us noble ideals, it gives us life-bringing hopes, it makes us love mankind and desire to work for its uplifting, it gives us back our prophetic spirit of old. And was it not a prophet, who loved his people best and his land dearest, who sent the message to his brethren in Babylonia: "And seek the welfare of the city whither I have caused you to go in exile and pray for it unto the Lord" (Jer. xxix., v. 7)? And do we not know from history that since those days of Jeremiah the Jews always served faithfully and well the countries in which they lived? But, as I said, our services to the country as citizens are insignificant as compared with the services which we hope to be able to render to all the countries as a regenerated nation in Palestine. Would England give up to-day its Christianity for any price in the world? But would England have had its Christianity if our forefathers would not have returned to Palestine about 2,500 years ago, if they would then have all wanted to remain citizens in the country in which they lived? Or another instance, even if we think only of those times. Would Cyrus have had such an imperishable memorial set to him by one of our greatest prophets if all the Jews had remained in Babylonia? And so the future of our race is important for England's well-being. Zionism means the fuller life of the Jew and the fuller life of his fellow-

man. It is, on the other hand, quite natural and self-understood that as faithful citizens of a country, sharing its burdens and contributing towards its progress, we should also enjoy its rights and share its privileges. Zionism, far from endangering our civil rights, enhances our claims on them.

It is thus clear that we can be the best English citizens, the best English patriots, not as "Englishmen of the Jewish persuasion," and not as assimilators, but as Zionists, that is as consistent and self-respecting Jews, true to our past, conscious of our present and looking forward to a future, aware of our real being and filled with the most sublime hopes, as Jews aware of the rôle we played in the days of old and desirous of playing again a rôle in the world, seeking the welfare of our fellow-citizens and seeking the welfare of the whole humanity, as Jews who feel that their re-birth in their ancient land will lead man to higher heights and will make him accessible to new revelations, as Jews who look to the rock from which they are hewn and intend to remain a rock for the support of mankind. And a rock we will remain. You, my young friends, have in your hands the means of the salvation of our people. Stick to the flag which you have unfurled. Work for the welfare of your nation and for the welfare of your fellow-citizens and show that Zionism is not only compatible with patriotism, but furthers it; show that the "setting of bounds about the mount" leads to revelations.
